

Holiday Happenings



Contributed photo by Binita Shrestha



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Santa's in town

At left, Eva Shrestha visits with Santa Claus at the Union Club in Hermiston on Dec. 7. The man in red has made appearances throughout the city in the past month, including several businesses, nursing homes, the Harkenrider Senior Activity Center and the Festival Street.

Living Nativity scene

Above, actors portray angels during the "Living Nativity" on Saturday night at the First United Methodist Church in Hermiston.

State gas tax to go up by 2 cents in January

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

As the state prepares to raise gas taxes another 2 cents in January, Hermiston already has plans for the increased revenue.

The 4-cent gas tax increase in the Legislature's 2017 transportation package gave the city of Hermiston an extra \$230,000 for street projects in 2019, and the city expects the 2-cent increase on Jan. 1 to add another \$120,000 to that amount.

The city of Hermiston hasn't imposed its own gas tax, but all Oregonians pay 34 cents per gallon in state gas taxes and 18.4 cents per gallon in federal taxes. The state distributes 30% of its gas tax to cities, 20% to counties and 50% to the Oregon Department of Transportation.

City Manager Byron Smith said the city used the additional gas tax funds it received to increase the number of projects it completed, instead of using them to backfill the budget.

"We want to be very



Contributed photo by the city of Hermiston

A Hermiston Water Department crew replaces a valve from the early 20th century at the intersection of Hermiston Avenue and Southwest Fourth Street in Hermiston earlier this year.

strategic about how to invest the increased gas tax revenues, which we knew would be coming our way as a result of the Legislature's 2017 gas tax increases," he said in a statement. "That's why we didn't simply absorb those funds to pay for business as usual, but we chose to program those dollars for specific capital improvement projects, which have been

needed for many years."

Hermiston also gained additional money for roads through a 33% increase in franchise fees, which the city council passed in 2017. Utilities, such as electric companies and internet providers, pay the franchise fees in exchange for placing their infrastructure in the city's right-of-way. The increase has raised about \$450,000 per year.

The city spent nearly \$1.8 million on street upkeep and new projects in 2019. Those projects included overlays on Harper Road, West Highland Avenue and Hermiston Avenue. The city also rebuilt part of Hermiston Avenue, replaced a bridge over an irrigation canal on South First Place, and is in the midst of a project to pave East Theater Lane from Northeast Eighth Street to Northeast 10th.

The Theater Lane project will continue into 2020, and the city is also working on designing a \$1.5 million project to realign the three-way intersection between Geer Road, Harper Road and North First Place where they cross the railroad tracks near Theater Sports Park. That project is expected to be complete in 2022.

Other projects the city will spend road funding on in the future can be found in its capital improvement plan.

Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan said back in 2017 the city looked at a number of ways to raise revenue for roads, but decided

against a local gas tax because so many Hermiston residents buy their gas from cheaper locations along the interstate, outside city limits.

"For Hermiston, it would generate revenue — all taxes generate revenue — but it wouldn't be as impactful as, say, Pendleton or Stanfield that are right on the freeway," he said.

They also ruled out a fee added to utility bills, because Hermiston has more than 4,000 people who live outside city limits but inside the city's urban growth boundary, meaning many of the people who drive on the city's roads every day wouldn't pay the fee.

As Pendleton considers new taxes to raise money to fix crumbling streets, it can be easy to draw comparisons between the quality of roads in the two similar-sized Umatilla County cities. But Morgan said it's not apples to apples — Hermiston experienced growth much later than Pendleton, and roughly one-third of its city streets were built in the past

30 years.

"Hermiston really grew after the point where vehicular travel was already the norm," he said.

Some of the numbers bear that out.

A February study commissioned by the city of Pendleton found that Pendleton's road quality was a couple points lower than Hermiston's on the pavement condition index, although Hermiston's data only included arterials and collectors, typically a town's largest and busiest streets.

The Pendleton City Council is planning to make up for the deferred maintenance by implementing a local gas tax, hotel room fee, and an increase to the street utility fee in 2020, although the gas tax will need voter approval before it goes into effect.

The city expects these new taxes and fees will generate more than \$1 million in revenue, but Public Works Director Bob Patterson said the state gas tax will still play a role in future street funding.

CRYPTOQUIP

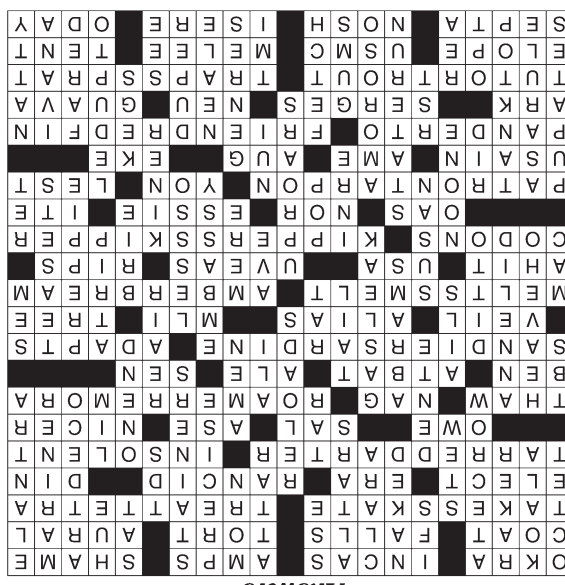
This is a simple substitution cipher in which each letter used stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Solution is accomplished by trial and error.

Clue: I equals T

TKYC IKY NXXGDY HXDCYR IKY
BKDBGYCU' ZEUYZEVV IYEA, DIU
CEAY TEU ERRYR IX IKY NXXUIYN
NXUIYN.

When the rookie joined the chickens' baseball team, its name was added to the roster.

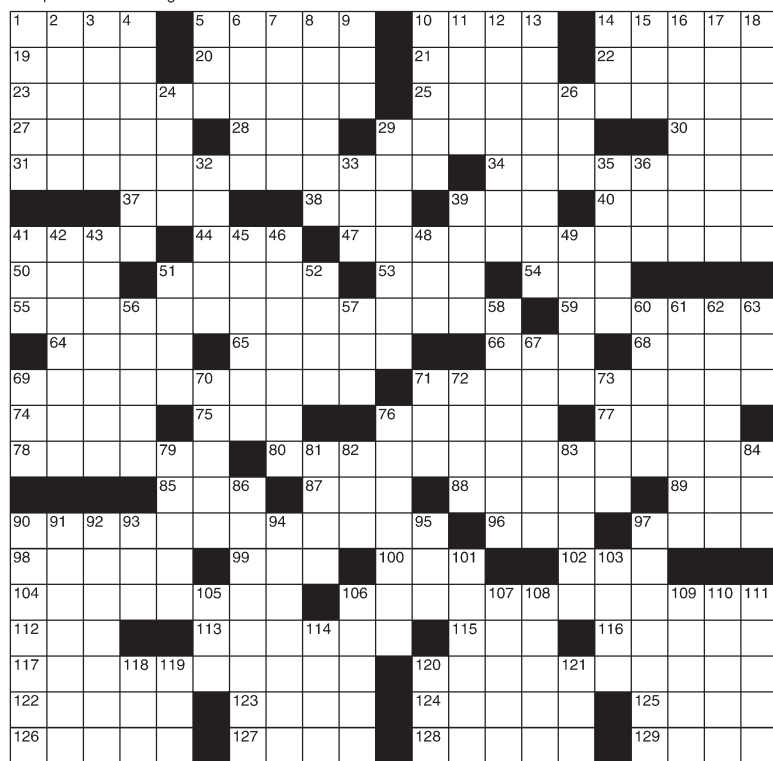
answer
Cryptoquip



Answers

SUPER CROSSWORD: MIX OF FISH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Creole cooking pod
 - 5 Early Andean concert stage items
 - 14 Disgrace
 - 19 Cover thickly
 - 20 Declines
 - 21 Wrongful act, legally
 - 22 Of the ear
 - 23 Grabs hold of a fish?
 - 25 Give a fish medication?
 - 27 Choose (to)
 - 28 Baseball stat
 - 29 Like spoiled cooking oil
 - 30 Clamor
 - 31 Fish smeared with black gunk?
 - 34 Cheeky
 - 37 Have bills
 - 38 Mine of "Giant"
 - 39 Suffix for an enzyme
 - 40 Not as cruel
 - 41 Turn liquid
 - 44 Old horse
 - 47 Fish drifting about aimlessly?
 - 50 Actor Stillier
 - 51 Baseball stat
 - 53 Hoppy quaff
 - 54 Wash. bigwig
 - 55 Fish covered with more gill?
 - 59 Modifies
 - 64 Conceal
 - 65 Fake ID
 - 66 1,051, in old Rome
 - 68 Larch, e.g.
 - 69 Makes a fish more sothearted?
 - 71 Honey-colored fish?
 - 74 Score with (impres)
 - 75 It's south of Can.
 - 76 Eye parts with irises
 - 77 Splits
 - 78 Triplets of adjacent nucleotides
 - 80 Cures a fish by salting and drying?
 - 85 Western treaty imits.
 - 87 Hide — hair
 - 88 Actress Davis of "The Matrix Reloaded"
 - 89 Ending for Bronx
 - 90 Fish that's a sainted guardian?
 - 96 O'er there
 - 97 For fear that
 - 98 Runner Bolt
 - 99 (Rosemary Clooney hit)
 - 100 It precedes Sept.
 - 102 Barely obtain, with "out"
 - 104 Grattify, as a base instinct
 - 106 Accept a Facebook request from a fish?
 - 112 Boat in nets
 - 113 Twilled fabrics
 - 115 Old's opposite, in German
 - 116 Yellow tropical fruit
 - 117 Teach a fish privately?
 - 120 Catches a fish in a net?
 - 122 Flee to get hitched
 - 123 Lance cpl.'s org.
 - 124 Free-for-all
 - 125 Fair shelter
 - 126 Philly's train system
 - 127 Light meal
 - 128 French river to the Rhone
 - 129 Singer Anita or Aubrey
 - 41 Samantha Bee's station
 - 42 Expulsion of Famer Ralph
 - 43 Earthworm, e.g.
 - 45 2009 "Star Trek" director J.J.
 - 46 Seepage of methane, e.g.
 - 48 Heavyweight great
 - 49 Put on TV again
 - 51 Suffers
 - 52 Dog part
 - 56 "I'll second that"
 - 57 Informer
 - 58 Envoy's building
 - 60 Just clear of the bottom, as an anchor
 - 61 Boarding school student, informally
 - 62 Some china ensembles
 - 63 Divinity sch.
 - 67 Not as much ammo in
 - 32 AI — (pasta preference)
 - 33 Seafarer
 - 35 Long side
 - 36 Max. or min.
 - 39 "I'll second that"
 - 79 Not a soul
 - 81 As to
 - 82 Old man
 - 83 Baseball Hall of Famer
 - 84 On Soc. Sec., often
 - 86 Operated on smaller than a national level
 - 90 Transforms, as larvae
 - 91 In general
 - 92 Sleeveless casual shirt
 - 93 Free (of)
 - 94 Lovingly, in music
 - 95 Rapa —
 - 97 Ushered in
 - 101 Music styles
 - 103 53-Across containers
 - 105 Q-U queue
 - 106 Sell for
 - 107 Writer Zora — Hurston
 - 108 Super- —
 - 109 Got along
 - 110 A Trump ex
 - 111 Spruced up
 - 114 They support teeth roots
 - 118 Choose (to)
 - 119 Stephen of "Utopia"
 - 120 Texter's "Didn't need to hear that!"
 - 121 Notice



SUDOKU

		5			4			7	
9				3					6
	2		8			3			
		4		5					1
	3		2					8	
7					9	2			
8				9				1	
	1				5				7
		7	6			4			

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK ★★ ★



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3	9	2	1	4	1	8	1	7
4	6	9	6	7	8	5	9	2
6	6	8	1	7	3	5	4	7
6	6	7	1	5	3	2	8	4
2	3	8	5	6	4	1	7	2

Answer

Weekly SUDOKU

Hermiston Herald

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